

## Who is Jesus?

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History reveals that about two thousand years ago, there was a man who was arrested, beaten, tried and judged within a matter of hours, then ultimately put to death for his crimes. Surely today, this could never happen since we have rules and laws to protect people from such a fate. Could it? As it turned out, the man's crimes consisted of spreading a gospel that was meant to bring hope and peace to people who had been crushed under the Roman authority for centuries, and he claimed to be the Son of God. To my knowledge, he never raised a weapon to anyone, and he had a reputation for healing those who were sick, and showed compassion to the poor and downtrodden. His name was Jesus.

Whether a person believes in any form of deity, or doesn't believe at all, we can agree there is proof that this man Jesus, did exist. As to who Jesus really was or is, depends entirely on who is asking the question. To some, he was a prominent historical figure, noted to be a good man who did a lot of good deeds. To some, he was more like a cult leader, who had many, many followers, as well as many enemies. He was also known for stirring up trouble in the Jewish religious circles, and even caused a scene once, turning over tables while people were trying to earn their wages. There had been rumors of miraculous healing and even raising a few people from the dead. It is no wonder that the authorities thought this man may be a potential problem for them...but death?

Today in America, we may not be executing people for their beliefs, but we are most certainly guilty of passing judgment over those who do believe. And I dare say, Christians seem to be fair game when it comes to verbal persecution. I come from both sides of the fence, you might say, and I feel a need to share what I have learned. I wonder if there aren't many like me who once doubted, but discovered another possibility...I was wrong.

Years ago, I only knew of Jesus as the dead guy on the cross, because of the crucifix worn on necklaces and the crosses I would see on display. I also knew him as a sort of a 'four letter word' that would come out of my father's mouth from time to time. The only other knowledge I had of this man, Jesus, was a joke my mother loved to tell... "Jesus is coming back, and boy is he mad". Although, she used another word for 'mad'. There was no reverence for the name in my house, at all. I had a friend who wasn't even allowed to buy candy on Sunday, because it was the 'Lord's' day...whatever that meant. But ironically, on Christmas and Easter, not faithfully, but often, we would pay a visit to a building called 'church', and I would see the dead guy on the cross again. "Oh, so that's who Jesus is".

Many years have come and gone, and I was free to make choices and decisions on my own. My thoughts on this man, Jesus, have changed considerably. Somehow, even with the off-color jokes being made and the twice-a-year visit to church, something told me there was more to this person than what I was being told. Later, I would smugly say to people that 'God and I have an understanding', to justify whatever I was doing wrong at the time. I thought I could do whatever I wanted, and God would love me anyway. Even though I still know this to be true, I wasn't aware that he wanted more from me. It wasn't enough that I 'believed' he existed. He wanted my heart, and my soul.

It is said we are all born with a type of hole or space inside, which is to be filled with God, and God alone. Many people spend their lives trying to fill that space with alcohol, drugs, sex or wealth, and when they come up feeling empty, they can't understand why. I spent many years

trying to fill that space with other things, and I most definitely came up feeling empty. Undeniably, even then, I could feel God tugging at my stubborn heart.

One day while waiting for a bus, two young men walked up to me and asked if they could ask me a question. I said, "Sure", and so they asked, "When you die, do you know if you're going to Heaven?" Of course I said, "Yes"! Then they asked me, "What would you say if upon entering Heaven, you were asked why you deserve to be there?" I thought my answer was perfect when I told them, "Because I did the best I knew how". The two young men handed me a simple pamphlet that had a beautiful red rose on the front. They thanked me for my time and walked away.

From that moment, I never looked at the relationship between God and myself as before. They didn't have to exorcise demons or thump their bible and preach at me. I knew immediately I had not been doing my best, not even close. I also knew there was more to the story of Jesus, and I wanted to know all of it.

I believe that Jesus did all of the things previously mentioned. I also believe Jesus, the Son, was able to raise the dead. He preached his gospel to all, and because he wasn't afraid to share this with everyone he met, he was crucified. Today, many have found other gods to worship. I believe and know in my heart that Jesus died, yes, but unlike the others, he conquered death and rose again. There is no burial place with his name on it. He is alive today. Not only does he live in Heaven at the right hand of God, but he lives within me.